



This Week in Iraq

Volume 1, Issue 1

Published by Multi-National Force - Iraq

August 15, 2005

Marines, ISF patrol Hit to disrupt insurgency

By Cpl. Ken Melton, 2nd Marine Division

HIT, Iraq - Marines with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, and soldiers from Company 1 Iraqi Security Forces recently conducted a familiarization patrol in the surrounding area.

The Marines and ISF soldiers are here to provide a permanent presence in the city after completing Operation Saif (Sword).

"In the past, multi-national forces have swept through cities and left after a week or so," said Sgt. Oscar F. Aguilera, a 24-year-old squad leader with 4th platoon. "But now that we are here, we showing the people that we won't be leaving and we will stay and continue to fight the insurgents in their town."

As the Marines left their base, a local family was preparing to leave the area because of the insurgents' threats of mortar attacks.

Most the families had already left the area a few days prior,



A Marine with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment and a soldier with the Iraqi Security Force help each other over steep hills as they patrol the streets to disrupt insurgent activity.

Coalition, Iraqi ministry sign historic charter agreement

By Sgt. Kevin Bromley, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division

BAGHDAD, Iraq- The children of Husseinia, a town north of Baghdad, play among heaps of trash, lakes of standing groundwater and open sewage.

Several miles away in north Baghdad, Col. David Bishop, commander of 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division; Ayad Al-Safee, the Deputy Minister of Technical Affairs for the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works; Nanjar Manshed, the Al-Istaklah District Advisory Council Delegate; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers signed a charter Aug. 1 that will ensure the citizens and children of Husseinia have a brighter and healthier future.

Husseinia is a settlement that took root in the agricultural region north of Baghdad in the 1980s.

Unfortunately, the Baghdad storm drainage and waste treatment facilities were designed and built in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the previous regime never extended these basic public services to the area.

The population of Husseinia—now nearly 750,000—steadily increased as more people moved to the town during the previous regime.

The large influx of people from the towns surrounding Baghdad created a public works crisis situation that

See Charter, page 2

after a mortar attack missed the base and hit civilian homes and buildings.

Aguilera asked the family to stay and continue with their daily lives.

"I took my helmet off when I talked to them in order to gain their trust and to prove that we are trying to make their area safe," said the Greenport, Long Island, N.Y. native. "It was a small sacrifice to help build positive working relationships with the people."

While on patrol, ISF soldiers and Marines handed out Iraqi flags, toys, and candy, provided by 5th Civil Affairs Group, to children while meeting with local leaders and prominent people.

As temperatures reached up to 130 degrees, they sought shelter from the heat in abandoned buildings or larger homes, with the permission of the owners.

"This isn't a house-clearing mission anymore, so we ask the owners if we can come and rest and regroup for a short while," Aguilera said. "Some are scared that insurgents will see us and come back later and hurt them; others are happy to have us over and often engage in conversation when we arrive."

Most wonder when they can return to their business and other day-to-day tasks. Aguilera ensured them that Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces want them to continue with their daily lives, but to keep in mind restricted areas

See Marines, page 2

Charter, continued from page 1

continues to this day.

"If there is a situation below poor, we [Husseiniya] are underneath that...it's bad," said Nanjar Manshed, the Al-Istaklah District Delegate.

To correct these health and public services problems, Coalition Forces and the MMPW decided they needed a charter to detail plans that will bring storm drainage projects, water-quality improvements, and, most importantly, sewage treatment facilities.

The Husseiniya Charter is the first of its kind in the area and the projects that spring out of this agreement will improve the city's health and welfare.

"It is a great project to help the people...we will have healthy water and less disease from the sewage all over the city," said Manshed.

Local Iraqi contractors will perform most of the work on these projects providing the additional benefit of employment for laborers.

"The widespread use of the local workforce not only adds jobs but helps to spike the economy as wage earners buy goods and services in the area," said Maj. Scott Sill, the Civil Affairs officer for 3rd Bde., 1st Armored Division., and a resident of Daytona Beach, Fla.

Coalition Forces are involved in the planning and project development stages, but the execution of the plans will be at

the directive of the Iraqi government.

"I think this is a tremendous project for the people of Husseiniya...This is an Iraqi project -- the U.S. Forces are only providing some funding and oversight," Bishop said, adding that it will provide jobs and invite better living conditions for the people of this area.

Husseiniya's programs will serve as the test-bed and guide for other projects in different impoverished areas in and around Baghdad.

"What we do and learn here in Husseiniya will be used as a road map for projects in other towns that desperately need basic essential services such as clean water, air, and waste removal," Sill said.

The MMPW and charter group organizers are hopeful that the newly-signed charter will be the springboard to additional charter groups and spread across the region to improve the lifestyles of Iraqi people across the nation.

"Hopefully, I will see the whole improvement from when they put the first shovel into the ground," said Manshed.

"These projects will make the people in Husseiniya proud."

Marines, continued from page 1

and rules mandated by multi-national forces.

When the residents adhere to the rules, insurgents are less likely to attack, and civilians can continue to make a living.

After the patrol members rested for a few minutes, they continued on their way to the local hospital and a council member's house. Along the way, some of this section's inhabitants retreated inside their homes. The soldiers and Marines remained watchful of their surroundings as they walked along the road.

As they completed their other objective visits, and moved into a different section closer to their base, they received a warmer welcome. Aguilera could relate to the people's attitudes towards war and new government from personal experience.

"I spent my childhood in Managua, Nicaragua during a civil

war, and I know about terrorists," he said. "My family helped our country before we came to the United States, and I want these people to help out just like we did.

"It's their country. They shouldn't fear to walk their own streets."

At the end of the six-hour patrol, he said they were slowly but steadily making progress in Iraq. He felt with the help of the ISF, this small patrol was a success.

"We are like the new kids in school," Aguilera said. "We are slowly learning the people and surrounding areas and one day we will be able to make an even bigger positive impact.

"Until then I'm just glad to say I was there and I was glad to do my part."

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Literacy program bolsters Iraqi Police force



Graduates of the recent pilot program for a new Iraqi Police literacy course proudly display their certificates of appreciation. (Photo by Ann Bertucci)

By Ann Bertucci, CPATT

BAGHDAD, Iraq - As word spread earlier this year that any Iraqi Police personnel would be dismissed if they couldn't pass a literacy test, some IP leaders expressed concern.

One police chief told how the fighters of his police force – those who stayed and bravely fought as others fled when their station came under attack – were the very ones that could be fired because they could not read.

The problem of illiteracy in Iraq can be traced back to the former regime. Either directly or indirectly, those who weren't favored by the regime were denied an education as a means of punishment.

Officials began to question whether the Coalition would be reinforcing such punishment by implementing a literacy requirement for police.

In response to the concerns, a literacy course for police officers was developed. The program aims to empower those impoverished by the former regime and to help the Iraqi people overcome illiteracy.

Targeting young, bright and motivated individuals, the Baghdad Police College began a pilot program began in June. Students selected from a group that had failed the police literacy exam were given a cognitive skills test that provided an indicator of their ability to learn.

Of the 105 students accepted into the program, 95 showed up for the eight-week course.

The program was developed and taught by five Iraqi teachers, former Arabic language instructors from elementary or secondary schools. They were selected based on their commitment and passion for the program, as well as their ability and desire to teach adults.

The instructors and students persevered through the eight-week course to accomplish what one student described as "the impossible." The challenges pulled everyone together, said Don Lane, who provided oversight to the program as a U.S. police trainer with the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, Multi-National Security Transition

Command – Iraq.

Lane described seeing the students studying together late in the evening in their barracks, sweat pouring from their faces.

"They supported each other through it all," Lane said. "I am extremely proud of both the students and the instructors."

Eighty-five students who made it through the training faced a final challenge before graduating – the police entrance exam – with 84 passing on Aug. 4.

Three of those are serving as police officers and are now in a position to retain their jobs, while 81 will shortly begin the 10-week police basic training program at the Baghdad Police College.

Because of the success of the pilot program, the Literacy Program for Police will generate at least three more courses.

Leaders intend to seek donor support for a wider literacy program serving police officers. Candidates for future courses will be those whose illiteracy threatens their jobs.

Those who pass the program will be able to remain in the police, while those who fail will be discharged.

After the graduation ceremony, where each student received a certificate of completion and a personal copy of the Koran, many students expressed gratitude to the instructors and staff.

"I have gained a new confidence in myself and no longer have to worry about not being able to read," said Zaman Salman Bhedel.

"This course has given me the ability to write a police report and read documents people give to the police. This is like a dream for me."

130 recruits qualify for Police Academy

About 130 recruits completed medical, physical and literacy tests on Aug. 7 to qualify to enter the Iraqi Police Academy. Recruits who passed the exams will begin an 8-week course in the Police Academy. Lt Col Ala'a Noori Hadi, Chief of the Ad Diwaniyah Police Academy, oversaw the recruitment efforts with the Civil Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT).

New recruits will receive training in police procedures and democracy, investigations, evidence collection, and how to prevent human rights violations.

Future Iraqi Police officers will serve and protect the Iraqi people. These police officers are well trained and capable of providing a safe and secure Iraqi society.

116th BCT Soldiers use face-to-face diplomacy with locals

By Spc. Chris Chesak, 116th BCT

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Iraq –

By 2:30 a.m., we're up, loading our armored Humvees in the predawn darkness. Weapons are loaded, machine gun timing checked, nervous laughter exchanged over a few smokes and supplies like water, stretchers, zip-tie handcuffs, flares and even a ladder are lashed down to the trucks.

Meanwhile, an Arabic neighborhood known by its sector name, 'Zulu 13,' slumbers peacefully. On rooftop balconies, families sleep together on foam mattresses to escape the heat.

Our command noticed that this area has hosted more improvised explosive devices (IEDs) than any other area of the city. They decided to send its residents a message: if they don't police up their neighborhood, then we will do it for them – even if that requires searching every single house in the neighborhood. Doing just that is our mission, code named 'Barbarian Fireworks.'

Our line of armored Humvees, Iraqi police vehicles and one armored cargo truck roll out of the base in the early-morning hours. En route, the half-mile long convoy maintains good spacing discipline, gunner's machine guns cover their proper lanes of fire and we scan rooftops for snipers and gutters for roadside bombs.

Nothing moves in Zulu 13, save an occasional wild dog and stray cat as more Iraqi army flatbed trucks deposit troops, concertina wire and 'hedgehog' anti-vehicle barriers around the neighborhood. The hundreds of Iraqi army troops create a cordon around the area that will ensure no one will go in or come out.

Our convoy arrives as two Apache attack helicopters start rotations around the irregular blocks of cinderblock homes and mud huts. Loaded with rockets and 30mm chain guns, their presence is just another part of the message we've been sent here to deliver.

Dozens of teams made up of two U.S. Soldiers and five Iraqi policemen systematically search each and every home. A sniper team covers the rooftops, along with the Apaches. We move tactically, weapons at the ready, down the roads, entering and clearing each home.

Most people are friendly, calm and almost welcoming. While we might have to ram open the door of one home, the next could welcome us inside and offer tea. One team, U.S. Soldiers included, emerges from a home munching fresh, warm flat bread.

As the sun finally creeps up from the horizon, children begin to peek out of their homes. Soon they emerge nervously onto the street to watch the Americans. I assist our squad leader, Staff Sgt. Kiril Dimitrov, from a Humvee and try to smile and wave to the families while also handling the radio, driving the truck wherever our team needs us, following a map and communicating with Dimitrov and the teams.

A gunner, Spc. David Wilson, mans a machinegun in the back of the flatbed truck and distributes water to our squad from a cooler as temperatures rise toward the daily highs of



more than 120 degrees.

Soon, Wilson has another duty – distributing to the local children some of the bags of candy, snacks and chewing gum that our squad collected. As a soldier, his role for the day is to cover our squad with the machine gun, scanning for potential trouble and generally supporting his team. But as a man, one with a big heart, he can't help but smile, wave and throw candy to these innocent children. When the radio is quiet, I sometimes hear him say, "Aw!" whenever he sees a particularly cute baby or little girl.

Staff Sgt. Dimitrov, tactical shotgun slung over his shoulder and bandoliers of shells wrapped around his chest, takes a break to give two small teddy bears to two very shy and nervous girls who peer out from behind a wagon. I take a moment from the radio to hand out a couple more stuffed animals to some very nervous local kids.

This is the duality of our mission here. We must be tactically proficient soldiers one moment, bounding quickly with weapons at the ready and scanning our sector for possible trouble and the next minute, immediately switch to smiling, waving, very accessible and happy ambassadors of goodwill.

This conflict is complex. Our forces here work to both quell any insurgents while helping to build public works. We must be a credible threat while simultaneously winning the support of the citizens.

We load magazines full of 5.56mm ammunition in rucksacks next to teddy bears and lollipops.

As Soldiers, it requires us to wear many hats – and many faces – switching quickly from warrior to humanitarian to statesman to friend. While definitely a challenge, it's a role that is ably filled by National Guardsmen with a diversity of life experiences and a plethora of real world skills.

Note: Chesak is assigned to Co. B, 2-116th BCT

What a difference a year makes

By Col. John Ottenbacher,

BAGHDAD, Iraq - From a bloody battlefield and one of the most dangerous places in Iraq to a safe, prosperous and growing community of over one-half million, the Najaf Teaching Hospital reflects the changes of the city of Najaf.

A year ago the Najaf Teaching Hospital was closed. It had been looted and its medical equipment destroyed by the Sadr Militia who had used its eight floors as a military fortress. Its basement flooded, windows and walls riddled with bullet and mortar damage, to many in Najaf, the hospital looked hopeless.

Now the hospital is open, seeing hundreds of patients per day and housing 80 in-patients.

It is a training hospital for 200 medical students, 50 pharmacy students, and 100 resident doctors who are looking forward to improved and expanded services.

This is a true success story brought about by a close partnership of Iraqi doctors and a U.S. team of doctors, engineers, project managers, contractors, and Soldiers and U.S Army Corps of Engineers civilians.

When finished, the hospital will house a new magnetic resonance imaging scanner, have computed tomography scan services, and have increased specialty surgical services including its first open heart surgical team.

The hospital will employ 1,250 people, in an area where good jobs are hard to come by.

There are many success stories in Najaf. A local television station teaming with local business and with coalition equipment support reported all the news including stories of U.S.-aided construction projects and humanitarian support.

A local art show, the first in many years, might have a display showcased in Kansas City. A new clinic for a sheikh, a man imprisoned and tortured under Saddam, is a reality.

This clinic was donated and refurbished by the Soldiers and contractors at Base Hotel, the base adjacent to Najaf.

Multiple humanitarian missions give food and medical care to the poorest of Najaf. There are daily working relationships with the Najaf government, police, and Iraqi army.

Many U.S. funded projects for new schools, water projects, police and fire stations, have all contributed to an excellent working relationship and many friendships between U.S. Soldiers, civilians, and Iraqi people.

All this and more have contributed to the success of Najaf.

Over 100 boxes of medical books, microscopes, and endoscopes have been sent from medical schools and hospitals all over the U.S. to Najaf.



Hassien-A-Yassr Alghzali is treated by U.S. Army Col. John Ottenbacher at the Task Force 198th Battalion Aid Station at Forward Operating Base Hotel, Najaf.

Churches have donated boxes of food, soap, clothes, and toys.

The Mississippi Family Support Group has raised thousands of dollars to sponsor children needing heart surgeries and medical care in Baghdad.

As the camp surgeon, I was blessed by a working relationship with Dr. Safaa the director of the Najaf Teaching Hospital, Dr. Ferris the Najaf Minister of Health, and Governor Gelal, a patient of mine, and the Governor of Najaf Province. I also enjoyed knowing Col. Majab, the local army commander; and his father, both patients of mine. I could get things done in hours that would otherwise take weeks.

Senator John Thune provided great support to me and the hospital. I honestly believe that Najaf is the key.

If successful all of Iraq has a chance.

Note: Ottenbacher is assigned to 1st Battalion, 198th Armored Regiment, Battalion Aid Station (BAS).

U.S. medics treat Iraqi injured by car bomb



Spc. Victoria Elordi of Caldwell, Idaho, a combat medic with Company B, 448th Civil Affairs Battalion, treats an Iraqi woman moments after she was wounded by a car bomb in east Baghdad Aug 6. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Andrew Miller, 2nd Brigade Combat Team PAO)

Sgt. Andrew Miller, 2nd Brigade Combat Team PAO

BAGHDAD, Iraq – U.S. Army medics provided immediate assistance to an east Baghdad woman who was injured by a suicide car bomb at 9:30 a.m. Aug. 6.

In the terrorist attack, a van swerved from an eastbound highway toward a U.S. military convoy parked on a parallel residential street, detonating just short of the lead vehicle.

The explosion sent fire and debris in every direction, blowing out windows and setting nearby palm trees aflame.

Before the dust cleared from the air, Spc. Victoria Elordi and Staff Sgt. Sean Stout, both combat medics from Company B, 448th Civil Affairs Battalion, were at work on their first patient.

“Our first reaction was to initially check everybody on the ground, make sure all the troops were okay and get accountability,” said Elordi.

“After that, I checked on the civilians.”

Although there were several people close to the explosion, only one local Iraqi woman was seriously injured. She sustained shrapnel wounds to both legs and was soon surrounded by a frantic crowd.

The medics splinted and dressed each leg but had to work around the woman, who was constantly pulling down her dress – concerned the men on the scene would see her exposed legs, Elordi said.

A nearby Soldier who found a 155mm mortar round uncovered by the bomb’s blast hollered from beyond the crowd, “UXO in the hole!”

Stout remained outside to secure the area, and Elordi moved the woman into her nearby house.

Amidst the woman’s frenzied family and neighbors, Elordi administered a saline IV and, through the interpreter, assured the woman she would be all right.

Twenty minutes later, further help and a stretcher arrived, and the local woman was rushed to a hospital.

As the woman was taken away, one young girl who had been sobbing through the whole scene had something to say to the last Soldier who left the room: “Shokran” – a simple thank you.

Soldiers build trust in neighboring villages

Q-WEST BASE COMPLEX, Iraq – Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery of Ft. Lewis, Wash, currently deployed at the Qarrayah-West Base Complex gathered with the Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army (IA) Battalion to enjoy a barbeque hosted by Maj. Gen. Ali Atala Malowh, commander of the 1st, at his home in Qarrayah.

“Since last November, I have worked with the Coalition Forces. We are one team, like brothers,” Malowh said during the barbeque. “Together we have captured a lot bad guys, and



have uncovered many terrorist cells that worked in this area, and through our teamwork we brought them to justice. It is proof of our success that we can all be here today and enjoy the food and be safe.”

The two units have been models for the rest of the country. They have successfully transformed their area of operation and have made great strides in the continued training of the new IA.

“This level of success demanded a lot of trust to train [the Iraqi soldiers] and include them in joint operations,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Martinez, 2-8 FA command sergeant major. “We eat together, we live together, and we plan missions together. I think the trusting relationship we have here with our counterparts really defines our success.”

Task Force Freedom Soldiers find chemical production facility

MOSUL, Iraq - Coalition Forces, acting on intelligence from detainee interrogations, raided a suspected insurgent chemical production facility and chemical storage locations on August 9th.

The early morning raids, conducted by Task Force Freedom, uncovered what technical experts assess to be a "clandestine chemical production facility" and possibly related storage sites.

Military officials are careful to state that ongoing analysis of the chemical evidence collected from the sites is currently insufficient to determine what the insurgents had been producing.

"We are continuing to investigate the production and storage facilities to determine what type and quantities of

chemicals were produced at the facility, and the specific threat posed to our forces.

"We don't want to speculate on any possibilities until our analysis is complete," said the Multi-National Corps' Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Defense officer, Col. Henry Franke.

However, military officials are confident that they have disrupted a potentially serious threat to coalition forces and the Iraqi people.

Concurrent with the technical analysis, intelligence experts are conducting related investigations to determine which terrorist or insurgent group is responsible for the construction and operation of the secret facility.



Sadr City residents are lining up for fresh, clean water as the first of 27 water compact units at Thawrat-Al-Hijara School is proving to be a very popular destination. The unit is producing 15,000 liters per day. By next month, 27 units will be in operation throughout the city offering a combined output of over 400,000 liters daily. The program is being coordinated by the Iraqi Ministry of Education and Water, the Amanat, and the local city government. (Gulf Region Division photo by Norris Jones)

Projects Completed This Week

The Khuschan Primary school, a \$43,000 project, was refurbished in Irbil Province.

The Hawdian Primary School, a \$43,000 project, was refurbished in Irbil Province.

The Similian School, a \$43,000 project, was refurbished in Irbil Province.

The Berchee School, a \$29,000 project, was refurbished in Dahuk Province.

The Perozana School, a \$31,000 project, was refurbished in Dahuk Province.

The big Washash /small Washash 33/11kilovolt electrical substation, a \$464,000 project, was rehabilitated.